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Works Progress Administration
Collection 119-1 to 119-18

Prepared & Revised by:
Greta S. Wilson
June 1980

Manuscript Division

Scope Note

The Works Progress Administration, WPA (name changed to Works Projects Administration July 1, 1939) was created by an Executive order of May 6, 1935 under the direction of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration. The purpose of this organization was to devise a program encompassing useful projects providing work relief for the unemployed. Officials of the WPA were Harry L. Hopkins, Administrator, Aubrey Williams, Deputy, and Alfred Edgar Smith, Administrative Assistant. Mr. Smith donated this collection of papers to the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in 1960.

The WPA provided training for Negroes in work in which private industry refused them opportunities for apprenticeship, and at the same time refused to employ them because of lack of experience and training. It was Alfred Smith's special division which was responsible for administering race relation matters throughout the WPA program. His division maintained close contact with Negroes employed on WPA projects nationwide; and was responsible for furnishing data to other government officials on the status of the program.

This collection consists essentially of correspondence addressed to Mr. Smith, Mr. Hopkins, the President and Mrs. Roosevelt and other WPA officials. The majority of the letters are verbatim typescript copies of the originals which reveal the unrestrained, sensitive and often times poignant emotions of the writers, who in most cases were poor, elderly, disabled or unemployed Black Americans. The contents of the correspondence are varied.

Scope Note continued

There are letters of complaints and requests for jobs; requests for money and pleas for artificial limbs; requests for farms and livestock; and requests for food and clothing. These and other pleas for help and information cover the entire relief spectrum and every other related subject.

An interesting compilation of letters, also included in the collection, is addressed to “Charlie Cherokee,” a pseudonym chosen by Alfred Smith, who also wrote two columns in the *Chicago Defender* called the “Grapevine” and “Adventures in Race Relations” in the early forties. These letters are similar in caliber to the other letters in the collection; however, many are complimenting Charlie Cherokee on his provocative columns and the columns impact on the lives of Blacks and other underprivileged folk.

There are manuscripts by Alfred Smith on the Negro and relief, employment, etc.; press releases from the WPA; annual and monthly reports. A general program of the whole WPA organization, with statistical data and survey information, is included and copies of the Negro Press Digest from January to December, 1942. The collection is contained in 14 boxes measuring 8 linear feet including several wrapped items. It covers the years 1934-51.

Biographical Data

Alfred E. Smith

- 1903 Dec. 2 Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas: son of Jesse Rufus and Mamie Florence (Johnson) Smith.
- 1926 Nov. 29 Married Leona Louise Dadson.
- 1928 Received A.B., Howard University, Washington, D.C.
- 1932 Received A.M. in History, Howard University Washington, D.C.
- 1932-1933 Substitute teacher, D.C. Public Schools.
- 1933-1934 Assistant to Director of Negro Works Federal Emergency Relief Administration.
- 1935-1943 Administrative Assistant and Staff Advisor, Federal Works Projects Administration.
- 1942 Organized the Capital Press Club.
- 1943-1947 Washington correspondent, columnist, feature writer for *Chicago Defender* and creator of popular columns "Charlie Cherokee" and "Adventures in Race Relations."
- 1948 Winner, Newsman's Newsman of Year Award.
- 1947-1949 Columnist, regular contributor to *Ebony* and *Negro Digest* magazines; correspondent for *Chicago Globe*, free-lance writer and publicist.
- 1949 Organized a "Gourmet Club" which met periodically for gourmet meals, drinks, conversation, music readings of original works, club members included: Sterling Brown, Arthur P. Davis, Frank Horne, Montague Cobb, Louia Vaugh Jones
- 1954 Race Relations Officer in the Public Housing Administration, Northeast Region, New York.

Biographical Data continued

1961-1965	Public Relations Officer for Sec. of Labor, Arthur Goldberg.
1965	Retired with 30 years government services.
1968	Presented a plaque by the Capital Press Club as one of its founders.
Present	Resides in Washington, D.C.

Series Description

Series A Correspondence

Box 119-1 Letters Grouped by Subjects. Letters addressed to President and Mrs.
to Box 119-5 Roosevelt, Alfred E. Smith, Harry Hopkins and other officials of the WPA are arranged according to the following subject headings: Women's Work, Urban Complaints, Unemployment Suggestions, Special, Sociology and Psychology, Save Home(to Pres. F. D. Roosevelt Rural Rehabilitation, Request Tab, Relief, Politics, Petitions for Betterment, Farm Colony- Domestic and Alaska-Africa, Ex-slave Education, Gripes, Labor, Help, Information and Observation, Let's Keep the Record Straight, Just Friendly and Thanks, Crackpots, An Ax to Grind Civilian, Ribbing me, Plug Thank You Please, Press, Black Cabinet, Patting My Back, Fair Employment Practices.

General Correspondence

Box 119-6 Letters covering a miscellany of topics, mostly complaints and pleas for help and
to Box 119-10 information covering the entire relief field and every related subject. These letters are addressed to President and Mrs. Roosevelt, Alfred Smith, Harry Hopkins and others and are arranged chronologically from 1934-1951.

General Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee

Box 119-10 Letters addressed to "Charlie Cherokee," pseudonym used by Alfred Smith for his
to Box 119-11 columns in the Chicago Defender, entitled "Adventures in Race Relations" and "Grapevine." This pen name ensured secrecy and permitted Smith total freedom of expression without interference from outside forces. Most of these letters are complimentary, extolling Charlie Cherokee for his exceptional columns and of encouragement to keep up the good work.

Series B Printed Materials

Box 119-11 Includes programs, brochures, broadsides, a poem, a report on conditions of farm workers, an address by Robert Taft on the progress of the Negro race.

Series C Manuscripts

Box 119-12 A summary of Negroes in federal government agencies, 1930-41; an article called "Resign or Resign," (author unknown) concerning Negro employment in Washington government; comments by Alfred Smith on a 30 day lay off of Negro workers in WPA; a copy of WPA general program.

Series Description continued

Series D Press Releases

Box 119-13 WPA press releases from 1936-1942 are contained here.

Series E Reports

Box 119-13 There are annual reports of Negro Project Works in WPA for 1936, 1937, and
to Box 119-14 1938 written by Alfred Smith; a monthly reports of activities of the WPA for
1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, and 1942.

Series F Wrapped Materials

Item 119-15 Contains bound copies of press releases for 1940, 1941, and 1942 of WPA; and
to Item 119-18 copies of Negro Press Digest for January-December, 1942, compiled by the
Division of Information, WPA.

Container List

Series A

Correspondence

Letters Grouped by Subjects

Box

Folder

119-1

- 1 Urban complaints - 1934-1936
- 2 Unemployable - 1934
- 3 Unemployable - 1935
- 4 Unemployable - 1936
- 5 Unemployable - 1937
- 6 Suggestions - 1934-1937
- 7 Special - 1934-1938
- 8 Sociology and Psychology - no date
- 9 Sociology and Psychology - 1934`
- 10 Sociology and Psychology - 1935
- 11 Sociology and Psychology - 1936
- 12 Sociology and Psychology - 1937
- 13 Rural Rehabilitation - no date
- 14 Rural Rehabilitation - 1934
- 15 Rural Rehabilitation - 1935
- 16 Rural Rehabilitation - 1936
- 17 Rural Rehabilitation - 1937-1938

Box 119-2

- 18 Request tab - no date
- 19 Request tab - 1934
- 20 Request tab - 1935
- 21 Request tab - 1936
- 22 Request tab - 1937
- 23 Request tab - 1938
- 24 Request miscellaneous - no date
- 25 Request miscellaneous -` 1934
- 26 Request miscellaneous - 1935
- 27 Request miscellaneous - 1936
- 28 Request miscellaneous - 1937
- 29 Request miscellaneous - 1938
- 30 Relief - A God Send - 1934-1938
- 31 Petitions For Betterment - 1934-37
- 32 Farm Colony Alaska - Africa
1934-1936

Container List

Series A

Correspondence continued

Letters Grouped by Subjects

Box	Folder
119-2	33 Farm Colony - Domestic - 1934- 1937
	34 Ex-slave - 1934-1937
	35 Save Home (to Pres. F. D. Roosevelt) 1935-1936
	36 Women's Work - 1935-1938
	37 Education 1936-1937
	38 Politics 1936-1938
	39 Reduction Protests - 1937
119-3	40 Labor, 1936-1937
	41 Complaints - 1937 - no month
	42 Complaints - January 1937
	43 Complaints - February 1937
	44 Complaints - March 1937
	45 Complaints - April 1937
	46 Complaints - May 1937
	47 Complaints - June 1937
	48 Complaints - July 1937
	49 Complaints - August 1937
	50 Complaints - September 1937
	51 Complaints - October 1937
	52 Complaints - November 1937
	53 Complaints - December 1937
	54 Gripes - period - 1944
	55 Just Friendly, and Thanks 1943-1945
	56 Let's Keep the Record Straight 1943-1946
	57 I Object - 1944-1945
	58 Information and Observations - no date
	59 Information and Observations - 1943
	60 Information and Observations - 1944
	61 Information and Observations - 1945
	62 Information and Observations - 1946
	63 Information and Observations - 1949
119-4	64 Information and Observations - re: "Service" relations
	65 Army and Navy Gripes - period
	66 Gripes from Fort Huachuca
	67 Nice Going, Keep it up Charley

Container List

Series A		Correspondence continued
Box		Letters Grouped by Subjects
		Folder
119-4		68 Armed Forces - Information and Observations
		69 Misuse of Manpower in Service
		70 Race Relations in the Armed Service
		71 "Truman Gibson"
		72 Help- 1943-1945
		73 Crackpots - 1944-1946
		74 An Ax to Grind Civilian - 1944-1947
119-5		75 Labor - 1943-45
		76 Plug Thank You Please - 1944-1946
		77 Press
		78 Black Cabinet
		79 Patting My Back - 1943
		80 Patting My Back - 1944
		81 Patting My Back - 1945
		82 Patting My Back - 1946
		83 Fair Employment Practices - 1934-1950
		General Correspondence
119-6		84 Letters to President and Mrs Roosevelt concerning labor 1934-35
		85 Letters to President and Mrs. Roosevelt concerning labor 1936
		86 Letters to President and Mrs. Roosevelt concerning labor 1937-33
		87 Letters to President Roosevelt concerning relief - 1934
		88 Letters to President and Mrs.
		89 Letters to President and Mrs. Roosevelt concerning relief - 1936
		90 Letters to President and Mrs Roosevelt concerning relief 1939-1940
		91 Letters to President and Mrs. Roosevelt concerning relief- 1941

Container List

Series A	Correspondence continued
	General Correspondence
Box	Folder
119-6	92 Letters to Mr. Harry Hopkins, Administrator W.P.A. - 1934-36 93 Letters to Mr. Harry L. Hopkins, concerning relief (labor) 1937-1941
119-7	94 Letters to Alfred E. Smith concerning relief - 1934-35 95 Letters to Alfred E. Smith concerning relief - Jan. - June, 1936 96 Letters to Alfred E. Smith concerning relief - July - Dec. 1936 97 Letters to Alfred E. Smith concerning relief - 1937-39 98 Letters to Alfred E. Smith concerning relief - 1940 99 Letters to Alfred E. Smith concerning relief - 1941 100 Letters to Col. Frank Harrington 1940 101 Letters to Assistants and Commissioners of W.P.A. (etc) concerning relief - 1935-1941 102 General correspondence - relief Jan.. - Feb. 1938 103 General correspondence - relief March - April 1938 104 General correspondence - relief May - June, 1938 105 General correspondence - relief July - August 1938 106 General correspondence - relief September - October 1938 107 General correspondence - relief November - December 1938 108 General correspondence - relief 1938 - no month
119-8	109 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - no date 110 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - 1934 111 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - 1935 112 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - 1936 - no date 113 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - Jan. - April, 1936 114 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - May - August, 1936

Container List

Series A

Correspondence

General Correspondence continued

Box

Folder

119-8

- 115 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
September - December, 1936
- 116 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
1936- incomplete
- 117 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
1937
- 118 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
January - February, 1938
- 119 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
March - April, 1938
- 120 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith
May - June, 1938
- 121 Letters to President Roosevelt Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
July - August, 1938
- 122 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
September -October, 1938
- 123 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
November - December , 1938

119-9

- 124 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith-
November - December 1939 - no date
- 125 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
January - February, 1939
- 126 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
March - April, 1939
- 127 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
May - June, 1939
- 128 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
July - August, 1939
- 129 Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith -
September - October, 1939

Container List

Series A		Correspondence continued
Box		General Correspondence
119-9		Folder
	130	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - November - December, 1939
	131	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - January - February, 1940
	132	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - March - April, 1940
	133	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith 1936 May - June, 1940
	134	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith July - December, 1940
	135	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - January - August, 1941
	136	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - September - October, 1941
	137	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - November - December, 1941
	138	Letters to President Roosevelt, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - 1940-1942 no date
	139	Letters to President Roosevelt Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Smith - 1942
	140	Humorous letters
	141	Oddities
		General Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee
119-10	142	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee no date
	143	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee 1942
	144	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee 1943
	145	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee 1944
	146	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee Jan. - Aug., 1945
	147	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee Sept. - Oct., 1945
	148	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee Nov. - Dec., 1945

Container List

Series A	
Correspondence continued	
General Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee	
Box	Folder
119-10	149 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee- Jan. Feb., - 1946
150	Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee March - April, 1946
	151 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee May - June, 1946
	152 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee July - August, 1946
	153 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee September - October, 1946
	154 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee November - December, 1946
	155 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee Jan. - Feb., 1947
	156 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee- March - April, 1947
119-11	157 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - May - June, 1947
	158 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - July - August, 1947
	159 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - Sept. - Oct., 1947
	160 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee- Nov. - Dec., 1947
	161 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - Jan. - Feb., 1948
	162 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - March - April 1948
	163 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - May - June, 1948
	164 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - July - Aug., 1948
	165 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - September - October, 1948
	166 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - Nov. - Dec., 1948
	167 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - Jan. - Feb., 1949
	168 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - March - April, 1949
	169 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - May - June, 1949
	170 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee - July - Aug., 1949
	171 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee Sept.- Oct. 1949
	172 Charlie Cherokee Nov. - Dec., 1949
	173 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee 1950-51
	174 Correspondence - Charlie Cherokee incomplete
Series B	
Printed Material	
119-11	175 Printed material

Container List

Series C	Manuscripts
Box	Folder
119-12	176 A summary of the Negro in General Government Agencies 1930-1941
	177 The Reputed Enigma ...
	178 Thirty-Day Lay Offs
	179 The Negro and Relief
	180 Defense Employment and Negro Workers
	181 The Rural Negro and Rural Rehabilitation
	182 Selected Bibliography on Books concerned with the Negro
	183 General program
Series D	Press Releases
119-13	184 Press releases - 1936
	185 Press releases - 1937
	186 Press releases - 1933
	187 Press releases - 1939
	188 Press releases - 1941
	189 Press releases 1942
	190 Press releases no date
Series E	Reports
119-13	191 Annual reports 1936
	192 Annual reports 1937
	193 Annual reports 1938
	194 Monthly reports 1936
	195 Monthly reports - 1937
119-14	196 Monthly reports - 1938
	197 Monthly reports - 1939
	198 Monthly reports - 1940
	199 Monthly reports - 1941
	200 Monthly reports - 1942
Series F	Wrapped Materials
Item 119-15	<i>Negro Press Digest</i> January - December 1942
Item 119-16	Press Release - 1940
Item 119-17	Press Release - 1941
Item 119-18	Press Release - 1942